

Social Science Research and Public Policies: the Case of Immigration in Belgium

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This paper summarises the major insights of a two-year inter-university research project carried out between 2001 and 2003. The methodological framework gives a central meaning to the domestic and international political context. After building and analysing a database gathering all Belgian academic research relating to migration and ethnic relations from 1989 to 2002, the two most widely researched domains of education and the labour market were thoroughly investigated in order to assess how social research has affected policy-making and agenda-setting in the field of migration and ethnic relations in Belgium. The weight of history and ideology, the importance of disseminating research results, and the role of institutional structures between research and policy-making, are all highlighted as core determinants of the influence of research. The paper also points to the relevance of an analysis aimed at taking into account the role of different factors – political paradigm, political context, specificity of field, etc. – in the process of knowledge utilisation at the political level. Finally, a series of recommendations are made on improving the links between social science research and policy-making in the field of migration and ethnic relations.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Belgium was facing serious difficulties in recruiting labour for coal production. Despite efforts to improve working conditions and salaries for coal miners, domestic recruitment dried up, forcing authorities to look to foreign labour. Beginning with Italy in 1946, and continuing with Spain (1956), Greece (1957), Morocco (1964), Turkey (1964), Tunisia (1969), Algeria (1970), and Yugoslavia (1970), the government pursued several bilateral agreements. When a crisis struck in the 1960s, these immigrant workers left to find employment in other industries such as iron and steel, chemicals, construction and transport.

In the early 1960s, when the demand for labour was still strong, the Ministry of Justice stopped strictly applying the legislation governing immigration. The worsening economic situation and rising unemployment in the late 1960s, however, led the Belgian Government to reinforce immigration legislation: new laws were passed to control the granting of work permits in order to regulate the flow of

immigrants into the country in line with economic needs. The new immigration legislation took into account the establishment of a more united Europe. In effect, it had to comply with the Treaty of Rome, which envisaged, among other things, the free movement of workers. European unity was to have an important effect on the immigrant question in Belgium, dividing immigrants into two categories: one in the supranational political sphere of Europe and the other composed of what are referred to as third-country nationals, i.e. from non-member countries. The first category enjoyed many legal rights aimed at encouraging equality of treatment between nationals and foreigners, while the second group faced various forms of legal discrimination. As in other European countries, all new immigration of foreign workers was halted in 1974 but this did not succeed in stopping immigration. The government's various initiatives to persuade certain immigrant workers to return to their country of origin were not successful either. Thus, in the case of Belgium, the official ban on recruiting new unqualified foreign workers never completely closed the borders. In fact, Belgium has never ceased to be a country of immigration, although it occurs to a lesser extent than before. Immigration since 1974 has simply changed, especially with regard to the types of immigration and the national origins of the migrants.¹

Even though a focus of debate between sociologists of migration has slowly emerged while research has grown, it is difficult to see the sociology of migration and ethnic relations as a firm and coherent theoretical corpus.² Moreover, the sociology of migration and ethnic relations was for a long time marginalised in academic circles and universities as an undervalued field of research. In the course of the 1990s, research into migration has undergone a process of change and demarginalisation. The development of integration policy frameworks at various levels of power has created a demand for strictly policy-oriented expertise. As far as the key issue of funding and intellectual legitimacy are concerned, social scientists found themselves in acute competition with growing non-academic expertise, most often linked to various kinds of organisational interest groups.

Debates on migration often lack serenity. Since the early 1980s, the major social fact of migration has become increasingly mediatised and politicised. The fear of the invasion of Europe by armies of citizens from poorer countries has rapidly spread. In Belgium, issues linked to the cohabitation between "native" Belgians and immigrant ethnic communities have increasingly raised problems of crime, drugs, unemployment, school failure and insecurity. Indeed, a major obstacle to the constitution of an autonomous research field on migration and ethnic studies is the absence of any epistemological break (Bachelard 1983; Bourdieu et al. 1973). The construction of the sociological problematic of migration and ethnic relations in the early days of the discipline simply mirrored the intuitive theories of migration available in common-sense representations, i.e. a biased conception of immigration in terms of economic, social and political problems. This led to the development of

¹ The above two paragraphs are an abridged version of sections of Martiniello and Rea (2003).

² The remainder of this section is based on Martiniello and Busetta (2001: 160–76).

a literature which is rife in binary perspectives, such as immigrants and housing, immigrants and school, immigrants and criminality, immigrants and security, immigrants and health, immigrants and culture, immigrants and the labour market, etc. (Sayad, 1984). In so far as it has tended to more or less directly answer a social demand, the sociology of migration has been constrained to internalise the problematised and dramatised perception of common sense, which is itself largely determined by a concern for social order (Sayad, 1979).

In these conditions, the task of social and political scientists is very delicate and complex, as they are asked to produce objective knowledge about a highly politicised set of issues. Could their work not contribute to the over-dramatisation of migration, even though their aim may be exactly the opposite? Is there not a risk of the results of their work being misinterpreted in order to fit political strategies?

Like social and political sciences in general, ethnic and migration studies seem to lack credibility and social legitimacy in Belgium. Sociologists and political scientists increasingly face competition with media specialists and non-academic experts. The latter often produce a more seductive discourse, even when it is not scientifically sound. As for academic researchers, they are sometimes accused of not engaging enough in social debate. But when they do so, their discourse tends to be disqualified because it is “disenchanted”, complex and even critical. At the end of the day, the impression is that they are only listened to when they can be used as an academic guarantee for political action. In this context, the issue of the linkage between academia and decision-making has become topical.

In this paper, we discuss the main findings of a two-year research project funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office and aimed at evaluating the impact of research on public policies in the field of migration and ethnic relations.³ Three major questions were raised in this research project: (1) To what extent has policy design in the field of migration rested on the results of scientific research? In other words, have policy-makers been inspired by research on migration to elaborate public policies (agenda-setting and policy formulation)? (2) What has been the role of researchers in the implementation of policies in the field of migration (policy implementation)? (3) How can reciprocal knowledge utilisation between academia, policy-makers and stakeholders be improved? In other words, how to smooth the interactions between these three worlds in order to improve the quality of research, the quality of public policies and, more generally, to stimulate social change towards greater well-being.

³ The topic of this research was originally an initiative under the aegis of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme, which had invited Member States to take part in a programme on the use of the results of socio-economic research in decision-making. The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (formerly the Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs) then decided to launch a proposal called “The Linkage between Social Science and Governance in the Field of Immigration in Belgium”.

The following section outlines the methodological approach. The second section elaborates on different ways of conceptualising scientific research and public policies, and the third section gives an overview of Belgian scientific research on immigration and integration. The major findings of our research are summarised in a final section.

1. Note on Methodology

In order to contribute to a structured exploration of the facilitators and barriers to knowledge utilisation, the project has followed the framework of inquiry suggested by UNESCO. This framework assigns a central meaning to political context and the characteristics of the issue arena, which itself is subject to polarisation as noted above. Appendix 1 summarises the key research questions, components and methods that have been used for hypothesis construction and testing.

We selected two domains, education and the labour market (more specifically, ethnic discrimination in the labour market) in order to answer the three central questions of this research with as much accuracy and relevance as possible. Our analysis of all research projects on immigration in Belgium confirms that these two domains were the subject of the greatest number of studies over the 1989–2002 period. It also highlights the differences between Flanders and Wallonia in terms of the overall approach to migration, as well as in the policies devised and implemented in the two regions.

1.1 Constitution of a Database

A database has been built gathering together all research projects on immigration and integration of people of foreign origin completed under the authority of university institutions between 1989 and 2002. Variables such as title of the research, institutions in charge of the project, topics studied, funding institution(s), etc. were included in this database.

The aim of such a database was to offer an overall view of the research projects that have been undertaken in Belgium, and thereby make a series of “snapshots” by comparing these variables. The links between variables were expressed in the form of figures, percentages and tables to better visualise the results of the analysis. It emerged that the domains of education and the labour market had been most studied in Belgium over the 1989–2002 period. On these grounds, we decided to carry out comparative analyses of research and public policies, as well as case studies, in these two fields.

1.2 Comparative Analysis of Research and Public Policies

Research and policy-related texts in education and the labour market were analysed using a grid based on a sample of some twenty research reports. For each of these reports, the main facts and problems underscored, the major explanatory

frameworks used, and the solutions put forward were highlighted. All research projects and policy-related texts in the two domains were analysed using the same grid, in order to compare the respective visions in scientific reports and policy-related texts and thereby highlight potential similarities or differences in the definition and interpretation of issues, as well as the proposed solutions. This comparative analysis also examined how the approaches to the issues of education and employment evolved with time. The working hypotheses for the case studies were then based on this analysis.

1.3 Case Studies

Through the case studies devoted to International Labour Organization (ILO) research on ethnic discrimination in the labour market and to the education of pupils of foreign origin in Flanders and Wallonia (Feld and Castelain-Kinet 1997),⁴ we have tried to discover *what kinds of research, and in what conditions, stand a better chance of influencing political decision-making and agenda-setting*. For this purpose, a series of semi-directive interviews with researchers, politicians, research initiators and evaluators, as well as members of the “third community” (associations, trade unions, etc.), were carried out. These interviews were conducted using an “interview guide” drawn up using UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations (MOST) framework. For data analysis, researchers also used the conceptual and theoretical elements developed within the ILO research project.

1.4 Focus-Group Discussion on Categorisation in Ethnic and Migration Studies

The researchers in charge of this project took part in a focus-group discussion on categorisation in ethnic and migration studies, reflecting on the categories used in defining target populations. In other words, the researchers tried to reflect on their own practices of scientific analysis. Following Bourdieu, they put their own scientific classification practices under critical scrutiny. They raised the issue of whether the analytical concepts and categories they use and produce could have a certain autonomy from those used in the political field and through common sense. The fruits of this discussion have been integrated with the scientific literature on the topic.

2. Observations on the Conceptualisation of Scientific Research and Public Policies

To understand the process of knowledge utilisation, both knowledge and its use must be defined (Rich 1997). We have adopted a dynamic approach that conceives

⁴ Contribution to international comparative research for the ILO by the Belgian Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs, and the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Struggle Against Racism.

of “information” and “the use of information” as general categories. Knowledge as a term can then be replaced in scientific research as one type of information competing with other types, such as data and analyses. It is also empirically useful to distinguish between the content of information and its format, as some formats are more user-friendly than others. Moreover, the use of information, and hence research, is best approached as a process. Stress should be laid on the plurality of potential uses of research results, which can be used both positively and negatively in different phases of the policy process without always impacting on policy decisions. Research results can function as warnings and put problems on the agenda. They can contribute to the definition of problems, help to set goals, and explore policy options. They can also serve to (de)legitimise policy decisions, and help to evaluate implementation. Ultimately, the use of information and research is not the prerogative of policy-makers alone, but also of third-party players with a role in the policy process.

The approach we have chosen to develop in order to apprehend the conditions of research utilisation departs from the two communities metaphor — i.e. researchers and policy-makers — and includes third parties in the conceptualisation of interactions. Yet the number and nature of social actors, as well as the nature of policy-making, is sector specific. This implies that the analytical model should be broad enough to allow good research heuristics. Studies of research utilisation should include an identification of the nature of research, both in content and form; the nature of users, from the policy community as well as from civil society; the nature of interactions and coalitions between different users (Lindquist 1990; Oh 1997; Rich 1997).

Knowledge utilisation literature examines how political decision-makers use (or abuse) social sciences and identifies the factors that influence the utilisation of social science knowledge. Although political elements are important in understanding the utilisation of social sciences in the formation of public policies, knowledge utilisation literature has accorded little attention to these factors, as Carol Weiss has stressed. We have therefore decided to complement the tools from the literature with the agenda-setting theory of John Kingdon (1995) and with a cognitive approach to public policies, the “policy paradigm” concept from Peter Hall (1993).

John Kingdon sees the agenda-setting process as one wherein solutions search for problems and the outcomes are a function of the mix of problems, participants and resources. The agenda process may therefore be conceived, Kingdon argues, as composed of three separate and distinct streams: problems, policies and politics. Three mechanisms serve to bring problems to the attention of policy-makers: indicators, events and feedback. Social scientists can in this way contribute to putting a problem on the agenda by constituting an indicator that measures the scale of a problem or changes to it, or by giving feedback on political programmes by means of evaluation studies. The *policy stream* is the stream of solutions proposed by the policy community. A long period of softening up is needed for the

political community to become receptive to a new idea. The results of social sciences research and recommendations made by scientists, before being accepted by the political community or public opinion, may serve this process of softening up. Elements of the *political stream*, such as changes in the balance of power in parliament, election results, lobbying, etc., can have a very strong impact on the agenda. These elements are given too little attention in knowledge utilisation literature.

This agenda-setting theory, although very exhaustive, does not respond to the following two questions. First, that of multi-level governance. While previously the national authorities controlled the inscription of new questions on the agenda, today, in numerous fields, this agenda-setting is done at least in part at European level. For example, when the European Council decides to realise a political objective by means of a directive (which binds the Member States concerning the results, leaving the national authorities competence over the form and means of bringing them about), this inscribes a problem at national level where it has to be legislated on to realise the objective put forward by the European Union. So a decision taken at European level by means of a directive can, on its own, open at the national level what we will call here a “supranational window”.

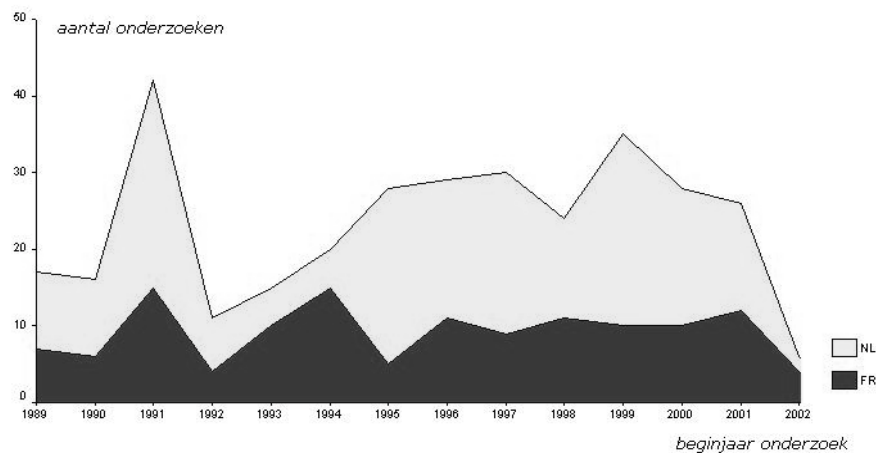
Second, although Kingdon explains that policy propositions must be compatible with the dominant values of members of the policy community to have a chance to survive, he does not explain how these “dominant values” can change and how alternatives previously unachievable at political level (because of their incompatibility with the dominant values) can be achieved later. This can be explained by Peter Hall’s “policy paradigm” (1993). This concept can be situated in the “cognitive approach” to public policies (Muller and Surel 1998) or the conception of public policy as “social learning” (Heclo 1974) that emphasise the role of ideas, values and representations conditioning the formation of public policies. Peter Hall, referring to Thomas Kuhn, defines the “policy paradigm” as “a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a Gestalt, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policy-makers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole” (Hall 1993: 279). A radical change of public policy is associated with a change of policy paradigm. This process of change is, according to Hall, more sociological than scientific, as the choice between two paradigms can rarely be made on scientific bases alone. Issues of authority (such as a significant shift in the locus of authority over policy) and instances of policy experimentation and policy failure, are likely to play a key role in the movement from one paradigm to another. The cognitive approach to public policies, and particularly the policy paradigm concept, allows us to contextualise the role of information and ideas emanating from social science research in the construction of public policies. It puts the role of research into perspective, especially when its ideas are in opposition to the dominant paradigm.

We now turn, first, to an overview of Belgian scientific research in migration and ethnic relations during the period 1989–2002, and then to a discussion of the major insights of this research.

3. Overview of Belgian Scientific Research on Immigration and Integration (1989–2002)

We have constructed a database containing an inventory of all Belgian academic (or academically supported) research into immigration and integration of migrants or people of foreign origin from 1989 to 2002. During this period a total of 420 research projects were undertaken in Belgium, 239 of which took place on the Flemish-speaking side (57%) and 181 on the French-speaking side (43%). The year 1991 saw an important momentum for research into these matters, once the Royal Commissioner for Migrant Policy⁵ actively started to set out the blueprint for an integration policy and suggested numerous policy interventions. Later, the start of new legislatures seemed to stimulate new research on the Flemish side, but less so on the French side.

Figure 1: New Research Projects into Immigration and Integration in Belgium (1989–2002)



Legend: Aantal onderzoeken: Number of studies; Beginjaar onderzoek: Year of beginning of study; NL: Flemish-speaking community; FR: French-speaking community

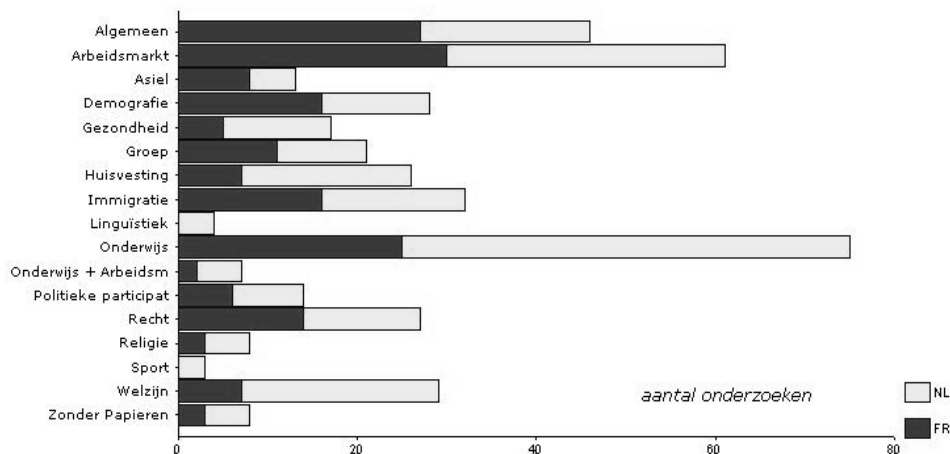
On the Flemish side, the Catholic University of Leuven (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) was most active on this topic during the entire period under study. The Universities of Ghent (Universiteit Gent) and of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit

⁵ This para-public institution was established in 1989 in a context of tension between ethnic youth and public security officials and along with the growth of the far right in northern Belgium at the 1988 elections. Its major aim was to design the main priorities of public policies aimed at immigrants. In 1993, it was replaced by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Struggle Against Racism.

Brussel) come next, and both are responsible for comparable amounts of research investigations. On the French side, there is an even distribution between the University of Liège (Université de Liège), Louvain University (Université Catholique de Louvain-La-Neuve) and the University of Brussels (Université Libre de Bruxelles). A network analysis of cooperation structures shows a great deal of collaboration across universities and disciplines on Flemish and French-speaking sides alike. There are also joint projects that cut across the language divide. As far as financing is concerned, these cross-linguistic researches are – probably not so surprisingly – mainly financed with federal money.

The inventory allows us to look into what issues were most popular for research from 1989 to 2002. On both the Flemish and French-speaking sides, education and labour market participation are clearly in the lead as research topics. Together, they make up 35 per cent of all research on the Flemish side and 32% on the French-speaking side.⁶

Figure 2: Topics of Research Projects into Immigration and Integration in Belgium (1989–2002)



Legend: Algemeen: General; Arbeidsmarkt: Labour market; Asiel: Asylum; Demografie: Demography; Gezondheid: Health; Groep: Ethnic group; Huisvesting: Housing; Immigratie: Immigration; Linguïstiek: Linguistics; Onderwijs: Education; Onderwijs + Arbeidsmarkt: Education + Labour market; Politieke participatie: Political participation; Recht: Law; Religie: Religion; Welzijn: Well-being; Zonder papieren: Undocumented people; Aantal onderzoeken: Number of studies; NL: Flemish-speaking community; FR: French-speaking community

⁶ Belgium is a federal state composed of three regions (Flemish, Walloon and Brussels region) and three communities (Flemish-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking). Each community and region has its own elected council and government. The Flemish region and community have merged, unlike the others. Communities are responsible for matters such as education, culture and personal issues (health care, etc.). Regions are responsible for the economy, environment, etc. For further details see http://www.fed-parl.be/constitution_uk.html

Since the late 1990s, the importance of research into the labour market position of people of foreign origin has clearly increased on the Flemish side. Furthermore, the Flemish Government increasingly pays for this research, whereas it used to be primarily financed at federal level. On the French-speaking side, federal financing has remained an important constant in research on this topic. Concerning research into education, the main funding is sourced at community level on both the Flemish and French-speaking sides, unsurprisingly, as education is almost completely – except for the compulsory age for education – a community matter.

4. Major Findings

4.1 Weight of History and Ideology

The influence of history and ideology – the dominant conceptions of the nation – on the processes of agenda-setting, policy-making and the implementation of policies in the field of immigration and on the impact of research on these processes have been highlighted throughout this study. In fact, our research shows how pervasive the differentialist rhetoric in Flemish-speaking Belgium and the universalist paradigm in French-speaking Belgium are (Martiniello and Manco 1993). The influence of this rhetoric on public policies relating to immigrants is most obvious in the case of teaching pupils of foreign origin. In the early 1990s, the Flemish Government tried to develop a coherent integration policy, the so-called “immigrant policy”. Soon after it also developed a genuine education policy for children of immigrant origin (Verlot 2001*a*, 2001*b*). Interestingly, the priority policy led to a very precise operationalisation of “target pupils” in which children and youngsters of immigrant origin were in fact being traced. Schools with large numbers of such pupils were accorded extra subsidies. As such, ethnic registration was already a fact of life in education in Flanders in the early 1990s, while similar monitoring remained impossible in other domains. In the operationalisation of “target pupils” – which boils down to ethnic registration – the scientific community played a considerable role.⁷ In French-speaking Belgium, few systematic public policies aimed specifically at the schooling of pupils of foreign origin have been designed, as most policy measures are global ones aimed at disadvantaged pupils and structured around the notion of “equality of opportunities” (Rea 2002; Rea and Ouali 1993). Such policies, contrary to those in Flemish-speaking Belgium, are characterised by the use of categories defined in socio-economic terms, not by ethnic or ascriptive categories. Similarly, few research projects are devoted specifically to the schooling of pupils of foreign origin and no long-term research programmes in this field have been implemented in French-speaking Belgium. We have argued that the general resistance in French-speaking Belgium to use categories linked to ethnicity and to therefore “act without naming” may have implications for the legitimacy of the constitution of a field of studies relating to the schooling of pupils of foreign origin, and more specifically to the study of

⁷ With a new decree on equal educational opportunities at the dawn of the new millennium, this specific operationalisation has been, however, once again abandoned.

ethnic discrimination in educational institutions.⁸ Hence, the influence of these universalist and differentialist paradigms is also noticeable in the nature of statistical data recorded in both parts of the country: the research object “teaching of pupils of foreign origin” is far more developed in Flanders than in Wallonia. We have argued that scientific production in social science in the field of immigration, when it raises questions that challenge the dominant paradigm, even when it is very rigorous and when it enjoys other favourable conditions, may not exert any influence, or only exert a limited influence, on the agenda-setting or decision-making process. This confirms Peter Hall’s point that scientific arguments cannot on their own generate a change in political paradigm. Other elements such as social pressure, failures of past policies, changes in the ideological balance within government, etc., may all contribute or hinder a change in paradigm. In the case study that dealt with ethnic discrimination in the labour market in Belgium, the universalist paradigm has also been put forward to account for the fact that positive actions have been resisted both in the French-speaking part of the country as well as by the trade unions, as such measures would imply the recognition of the target group — immigrants or people of foreign origin — as a specific group wherefore specific actions have to be organised to improve their situation. It is exactly this acceptance as a specific group that is problematic, mainly because of the universalist paradigm predominant in French-speaking Belgium.

4.2 Importance of Dissemination Process

The dissemination of social science research results is one of the relevant elements that has to be taken into account in the analysis of links between social science and public policies. The case study into the ILO research on ethnic discrimination in the labour market reveals the importance of working out a *dissemination strategy* of research results (Feld and Castelain-Kinet 1997). It has been argued that the way the ILO study was disseminated is one of the factors that largely contributed to its influence at political level. At the outset of this research project, contracts were concluded with partners, other than research institutes, for the valorisation of the results. The ILO was responsible for valorising the results at international level and the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism at national level. So the valorisation activity was not left to the researchers, but rather to policy entrepreneurs as users of the results. As John Kingdon has argued, “political entrepreneurs” may play a crucial role of advocacy and brokerage within the coupling process of solutions, problems and political momentum when a “political window” opens (Kingdon 1995).

While the weight of dissemination strategies has been stressed, the time spent by scholars on dissemination is undervalued. The decision to spend time

⁸ The ethnic, and not solely socio-economic, dimension of discrimination in school institutions has been largely played down in French-speaking Belgium and no research has been commissioned on this topic, despite the fact that such research projects have been repeatedly called for both by scholars and by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Struggle Against Racism.

disseminating research results is indeed often spent at the expense of other more highly valued activities such as scientific writing.

In addition to the importance of designing a dissemination strategy, we have also found that in some instances, the transmission of research findings – especially in the early 1990s – may be enhanced by individual research brokers, who are consecutively, and at times even concurrently, active as researcher *and* policy-maker. This has surely stimulated the transfer of research findings to the policy arena in the education of children of immigrant origin in Flanders. We have also found that the structuring of a more or less formalised long-term collaboration between academics, third-party and political actors may be important in the process of dissemination and *visibilisation* of ideas and concepts developed and enacted through such collaboration. In this way, these ideas and concepts may be made available to policy-makers when they may need to mobilise them.

4.3 Role of Interface Structures

The role of structures that ease the interface between scientific, political and third-party spheres (such as NGOs, trade unions, etc.) has also been demonstrated, raising the issue of the institutional arrangements that can help social science results to feed into the policy-making process. The case study on public policies regarding pupils of foreign origin in Flanders does indeed clearly shed light on the importance of such structures. In Flanders, structural links between policies aimed at the teaching of pupils of foreign origin and social science research have been established since the beginning of the 1990s. The government has facilitated a certain continuity of expertise with regard to practical educational support in schools by subsidising two specific centres of expertise (Steunpunt NT2 and Steunpunt ICO in Flemish) for a number of years (Schrijvers and Van de Velde 1999; Delrue and Hillewaere 2001). In addition, a number of research projects – both policy support as policy evaluation – have been set up with regard to the position of children of immigrant origin in the education system. Several of these studies seem to have had an immediate impact and have led to specific changes in the *modus operandi* of a number of schools. The construction of centres of expertise has led to stability and continuity. Thus, not only is the constant development of expertise in the scientific community guaranteed, irrespective of changes of legislature and changing political emphasis, but a forum is created in which the belief and perception of utility can improve among policy-makers and relationships of trust and credibility can develop with regard to research. Institutional embedding and the direct link between government and researchers seems to be a better guarantee for research results to be taken into account than when dealing with “independent” research.

If such institutional arrangements can facilitate the links between social science research and the policy-making process, they can also sometimes bring about problems such as a lack of transparency, as happens when scholars are not required to make public the results of their research. Another drawback stressed is that

research projects' agendas are mainly set by the funding bodies, which has resulted in an emphasis on research dealing with categorical policy measures, and to a much lesser degree with the position of pupils of foreign origin with regard to teaching in general.

4.4 *Relevance of Multi-Dimensional Approach*

The insights of this research also point to the relevance of an analysis that is not restrained to one factor or another in particular, but that aims at taking into account the role of different elements – political paradigm, political context, specificity of the field, etc. – in the process of knowledge utilisation at the political level. Through this research, we believe that we have demonstrated the importance of political factors in this process. It shows, in several respects, that elements linked to the political balance of power, such as changes within the administration or in parliament, or changes in the national mood, all influence the possibility of certain questions or arguments being put on the agenda. Moreover, this research has stressed the weight that the international context, especially at the level of the European Union, can have as to the impact of research on public policies. For example, a concept such as *cultural diversity* or a question that is targeted by a European directive, such as equality of treatment in the labour market, may have a greater chance to exert influence or appear on the national political agenda. It may be argued that changes in the national political context, as well as changes at the international level, can both facilitate the opening of John Kingdon's "political windows" and allow for ideas, conceptions about an issue and solutions developed by researchers to be acknowledged at the political level. In the case study dealing with the schooling of pupils of foreign origin in French-speaking Belgium, we have argued that some notions may be given a greater receptivity by being articulated or attached to some more legitimate and less polemic categories. This has been the case, we have suggested, with the concept of "intercultural education" as it was increasingly incorporated into the more global notion of "diversity education" and its potential legitimacy was enhanced, because the European Commission is promoting this latter notion. Furthermore, we have argued that the concept of "diversity education" may more easily be linked to the concept of citizenship, which is a key concept in French-speaking Belgium's political discourse. As Kingdon has observed, within the process of turning a question into a "political problem", an important aspect is the category within which this question may or not be put, for the category "structures people's perceptions of the problem in many important respects" (Kingdon 1995).

4.5 *The Stakes of Categorisation*

The dilemma that scholars often face, whether it is "possible to generate new forms of classification that, while they would be emancipated from national categories, would not be submitted to the categories of common sense" (Simon 1997), has also been examined in our research. Despite the fact that scientific activities relate more to description and analysis than to prescription, the categories mobilised by

scholars may well change into categories of action. Scholars are therefore often caught in this tension between description and prescription in their categorisation practices. This is especially so in the field of population statistics (Jacobs 2002). It was stated during the focus-group discussion on ethnic categorisation that scholars ought to define the terms they use as precisely as possible. The issue of precision of terminology is most acute when scientific information is circulated in the public and political spheres. In these circumstances, to what extent can or should scholars adapt their vocabulary, the scientific notions, concepts and categories they use according to the setting in which they are situated? Even though categorising does not necessarily equate with enacting separations, it may be assumed that mobilising categories and associating them with some social problems is somehow to take part in a classification struggle for the imposition of legitimate representations of the social world (Bourdieu 1980; Jenkins 2000).

While we agreed that this debate on the implications of ethnic categorisations is most important, we strongly emphasise that it is the need to objectify processes of ethnicisation or racialisation of social relationships, so pervasive in contemporary society, that justifies the utilisation of ethnic categories in scientific analyses (Simon 1997; De Rudder et al. 2000). Any struggle against ethnic discrimination therefore requires the deconstruction of both ethnicising and racialising categories. Debates about the relevance and implications of ethnic categorisation in social science should not prevent scholars from objectifying a whole set of phenomena relating to segregation, exclusion and discrimination.

5. Conclusions

Overall, our research shows that there is no systematic effort on the part of the authorities to monitor the participation of ethnic minorities in the different spheres of society. At present, no systematic data except on nationality exist that would allow people's ethnic origin to be taken into account. Consequently, it is difficult to judge how the situation of ethnic minorities is developing and to assess the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at equality of opportunities.

Our research also sheds light on the precariousness of the situation of researchers. Indeed, our analysis of scientific research on migration and ethnic studies over the 1989–2002 period confirms the great instability most researchers are faced with. Worse, there seems to be more and more funding of short-term research projects. This is taking place in a general context of transformation of European universities characterised by increased competition within and among universities and by greater job instability for academics and researchers (Piron and Couillard 1996; Bachelet 2003). We have not looked into the dimension of the progressive instrumentalisation of universities, but we may assume that the trends we have just highlighted may influence, and perhaps threaten, the autonomy of scientific production.

The two sets of recommendations put forward at the conclusion of this research are listed below. One set aims at research policy in social science in the field of immigration and the other at interactions between the scientific community, the political community and the stakeholders.

5.1 Recommendations Regarding Research Policy in Social Science in the Field of Immigration

- Long-term social science research programmes in the field of immigration ought to be carried out at the international, European, national and regional levels. The research programmes at these different levels should be integrated and articulated.
- Research projects that combine theoretical and methodological rigour, as well as empirical wealth, are most likely to generate policy-relevant knowledge in the long term. This type of research therefore ought to receive top-priority funding.
- An extensive quantitative and qualitative survey on the position of immigrants and their offspring within all institutions and spheres of Belgian society (employment, education, housing, politics, etc.) ought to be carried out every three to five years. Such a survey would require substantial funding and should be managed by the relevant Belgian scientific funding bodies (FNRS, FWO, SPST).
- The valorisation of research first requires the revalorisation of the researcher's status. It is most urgent to struggle against the increasing precariousness of the status of researchers. Substantial financial means ought to be allocated in order to allow researchers to carry out long-term research.

5.2 Recommendations Regarding Interactions between the Scientific Community, the Political Community and the Stakeholders

- While most of us are convinced of the importance of building a partnership between the scientific community, the political community and the stakeholders, a methodology of partnership has yet to be put forward. The roles and expectations of each community ought to be clarified.
- Following the Canadian experience, the possibility ought to be envisaged of setting up three centres of excellence in the field of migration, one for each region of the country. These centres would involve the scientific community, the political community and the stakeholders (third community). The aims would be to generate better communication among these three communities; to allow each community to redirect its own

practices in relation to the other communities' practices; to allow for the institutionalisation and cross-evaluation of each community's practices.

- The exchange of information and data between the different communities should be improved as part of a reinforced cooperation. For example, researchers ought to have easier access to national statistics data.

Note

- * This article has been written with Ilke Adam (ULB-GERME), Pascal Balancier (ULg-SPIRAL), Marleen Brans (KUL-Instituut voor de Overheid), Dirk Jacobs (KUB, KUL-ISPO), Andrea Rea (ULB-GERME), Marc Swyngedouw (KUB, KUL-ISPO), and Tinne Van der Straeten (KUL)

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Appendix 1

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS	RESEARCH COMPONENTS FOR OPERATIONALISATION	
<i>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</i>		
<i>What are the characteristics of the research and the researchers who conduct it?</i>	Initiation of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification of initiators, purpose of initiation ▪ Formal proposal or request for proposal ▪ Funding agents
	Review of study proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who judges ▪ Conflicts of judgement ▪ Criteria for approval
	Researcher(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual and institutional reputation ▪ Research experience ▪ Disciplinary affiliation
	Conduct of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Duration ▪ Capacity ▪ Stakeholders ▪ Theoretical and methodological frameworks ▪ Data-collection and analysis ▪ Nature of reports
	Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content ▪ Direction ▪ Nature of proposed changes ▪ Financial and institutional consequences of

		implementation
<i>What are the modes of dissemination or the linkage between researchers and the policy arena?</i>	Dissemination of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature of dissemination ▪ Stakeholder debate ▪ Third-party dissemination: championing and media ▪ Networking
<i>What are the characteristics of potential user groups?</i>	Prospective users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disciplinary background ▪ Familiarity with issue arena ▪ Position in policy formulation ▪ Reception of findings
<i>What are the characteristics of the political domain that the research enters?</i>	Political context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ History ▪ Path-dependency of debate ▪ Nature of polarisation ▪ Lobbying ▪ Evidence of crisis
<i>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</i>		
<i>What are the characteristics of knowledge utilisation?</i>	Utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconsideration of policy ▪ Implementation of changes ▪ Nature of changes ▪ Duration of implementation
RESEARCH METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of documents, records, newspaper articles ▪ Multiple interviews with initiators, researchers, reviewers, disseminators, prospective users 	